

# City CURRENTS

WINTER 2013



A NEIGHBORHOOD  
CITY INCORPORATED  
IN 1925

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## West U Goes 24/7 with "Click West U"

It's now easier than ever to contact the City of West University Place to request services. On November 12, the City launched its new citizen request system called "Click West U." This new system makes it easier for residents to contact the City with requests, questions and concerns.

Click West U is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, by residents who may access the system in whichever way is most convenient. Contacting us on the go? There's a new app for that! Methods for submitting a service request include:

- Computer users can reach us on the web at [www.westutx.gov/clickwestu](http://www.westutx.gov/clickwestu).
- iPhone, iPad and Android users can download a free app for submitting requests. Links to the apps and instructions for their use can be found at [www.westutx.gov/clickwestu-info](http://www.westutx.gov/clickwestu-info).
- Residents can contact the City by phone, fax or in person, and their requests will be entered into Click West U by a City employee; residents will be offered a choice of how they would like to be updated on the status of their requests.

The City of West University Place already prides itself on employing helpful and responsive staff. But Click West U will make it seem as if there's a staff member available at any time to receive a resident's service request.

When residents use Click West U to contact the City, they don't need to know which employee or department is responsible for a specific service — the Click West U system ensures the right person is contacted.

Click West U will benefit both the City and its residents by...

- Ensuring that no request gets lost or sits on the desk of a supervisor who is not in the office.
- Creating unique tracking numbers for each request so both employees and residents can easily track its status at any time.
- Notifying the resident when the request has been completed.
- Allowing the resident to provide feedback to the city via a short on-line survey.

Residents who submit a request may either provide their contact information for tracking and follow-up or remain anonymous. The City recognizes that some residents or business operators may wish to provide information anonymously, and the system allows them to easily do so. Those who choose to provide their contact information have several communications options for tracking and follow-up.



# From The Mayor's Desk

by Mayor Bob Fry

Business owners have long recognized that happy employees make for happy customers. Happy employees are more attentive to the people they serve. The same can be said for cities. Residents of West University Place are indeed blessed with some exceptionally happy employees. And now they have formal recognition. In November, West U was selected as one of the *Houston Chronicle's* Top Workplaces in the "Small Company" category, which included organizations of 150 employees or less.

Top Workplaces are determined based solely on employee feedback. WorkplaceDynamics, LLP, a leading research firm on organizational health and employee engagement, conducts regional Top Workplaces programs in conjunction with more than 30 major publishing partners. It also produces a national list of Top Workplaces. Over the past year, more than 4,500 U.S. organizations have turned to WorkplaceDynamics to better understand what's on the minds of their employees.



It is very difficult to be chosen as a Top Workplace, especially for a municipality. West U was the only municipal government on the *Houston Chronicle* list.

I constantly receive compliments from citizens about the treatment they receive from our City employees. West U's excellent customer service is not achieved by accident. It begins with a management team that believes in a good work environment. It includes citizens who recognize and appreciate work well done. And, yes, it even requires the active support of the Mayor and City Council. But most importantly, good customer service is the result of happy employees who appreciate the value of hard work, respect their fellow workers and enjoy serving the public well.

**"... most importantly, good customer service is the result of happy employees who appreciate the value of hard work, respect their fellow workers and enjoy serving the public well."**

We are indeed fortunate to have the high quality staff we do. But we, as citizens, have our part to play. Residents' respect, courtesy and appreciation of a job well done by City employees are very important. Be respectful of our employees. Say thank you when a job is done well. If we all do our part, West U will remain one of the Top Workplaces for years to come.

Keep in touch with Mayor Fry as he shares news and comments with residents.

Visit [www.westutx.gov/mayors-message](http://www.westutx.gov/mayors-message) for regular updates.

**Keep in Touch with Mayor Fry**



# From Council Member Joan Johnson



As residents of West University Place, we enjoy many services and benefits that are not common in other cities. This includes tremendous community outreach provided by our emergency responders – our Fire and Police Departments. Last September and October, approximately 25 residents had the opportunity to participate in a CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) Training Program. This training was sponsored and conducted by our Fire Department in partnership with Harris County.

CERT training is designed to prepare you to help yourself, your family, your neighbors and others in your community in the event of a catastrophic disaster. Remember Ike? Or what people went through recently in the Northeast when Sandy hit? When a large-scale disaster strikes, West U's emergency services may not be able to immediately assist everyone. Therefore, residents with CERT training can step in to help save lives and property. Once certified, participants are provided with supplies that include a vest that identifies them as a member of a CERT

team. Among other safety procedures, residents learn during this training how to:

- Identify and reduce potential fire hazards in their homes, workplaces and neighborhoods
- Work as a team to apply basic fire suppression strategies
- Employ techniques for opening airways, controlling excessive bleeding and treating victims in shock
- Perform head-to-toe patient assessments
- Provide basic treatments for various injuries, and apply splints to suspected broken bones and sprains

These and other procedures help victims until our emergency responders can arrive on the scene. Training includes not only lectures, but also the opportunity to work with a team to implement the material that you have learned. Participants are not trained to be medical professionals, but learn to be first responders. Recent training sessions were held every

Wednesday night for eight weeks from 6:30 to 9:30 PM. This was a large time commitment, but CERT training will benefit you and your fellow citizens.

There are about 15,000 certified CERT responders in Harris County and 40 in the City of West University Place. Another CERT Training Program for West U starts February 20, 2013. If you are interested in participating in this class, please contact Derek Elkins, Fire Captain, at (713) 662-5835 or email him at [delkins@westutx.gov](mailto:delkins@westutx.gov). Registration opened in December. For additional information about participating, visit [www.westutx.gov](http://www.westutx.gov).



Members of the CERT class, photo courtesy of Jennifer Suter

# Community Message Board

## City Phone Numbers

Emergency – Police & Fire: 911

Police Dept. Non-emergency:

(713) 668-0330

General City Information:

(713) 668-4441

Building Permits: (713) 662-5833

Code Enforcement: (713) 662-5831

Colonial Park Pool: (713) 662-7460

Community Building: (713) 662-5895

DirectLink Alarm Monitoring:

(713) 662-5860

Fire Dept. Non-emergency:

(713) 662-5835

Friends of West U Parks:

(713) 662-7430

Municipal Court: (713) 662-5825

Planning Department: (713) 662-5843

Police Dept. Crime Prevention:

(713) 662-5869

Public Works Information:

(713) 662-5839

Recreation Center: (713) 662-7420

Senior Services: (713) 662-5895

Urban Forestry: (713) 662-5313

Utility Billing: (713) 662-5824

## QUIET HOURS

Weekdays (Mon – Fri), except holidays

Before 7:00 AM or after 8:00 PM

Saturdays, except holidays

Before 8:00 AM or after 8:00 PM

Sundays and on New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and the corresponding Friday or Monday on which the city observes that holiday

Before 12 Noon or after 8:00 PM

## Friday Night Life for Tweens and Teens!

Tired of hanging out at the movies or your friend's house? Looking for something fun to do on a Friday night? Come to the Recreation Center and hang out with all your friends. We'll have gaming, music, dancing, food and more! The first "Friday Night Live" will be on January 4, 9:00 – 11:30 PM, with more dates to come soon. Be sure to join the fun! Call (713) 662-7420 for more information.



## EGGStravaganza Spring Festival

Join us on Saturday, March 23, 9:00 – 11:00 AM, at the West University Place Recreation Center Fields for this spring celebration. Enjoy West U's first annual egg-scamper hunt, face painting, food, crafts and more! Admission to the event is complimentary and open to children up to 11 years.



## Go ahead, take a guess!

### Can you guess the number of eggs in the Di-Eggo Tower of Eggs?

Di-Eggo, a giant egg tower, will be displayed at the Recreation Center starting March 1. Take a guess as to how many eggs Di-Eggo can hold and you might just win a prize! To participate, pick up a registration form at the Customer Relations Desk at the Recreation Center, 4210 Bellaire Blvd. Participants must be residents of West U to be eligible for a prize.

## 2013 Garbage / Recycling Holiday Schedule

### New Year's Day, Tuesday, January 1:

No curbside collection. Trash regularly scheduled for this day will be picked up the day before (Monday, December 31). Please hold your recycling until your next scheduled recycle day.

### Good Friday, Friday, March 29:

No curbside collection. Normal collection will resume on your next scheduled day.

### Memorial Day, Monday, May 27:

No curbside collection. Normal collection will resume on your next scheduled day.

### Independence Day, Thursday, July 4:

No curbside collection. Normal collection will resume on your next scheduled day.

### Labor Day, Monday, September 2:

No curbside collection. Normal collection will resume on your next scheduled day.

### Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, November 28:

No curbside collection. Trash regularly scheduled for this day will be picked up on Friday (November 29). Please hold your recyclables until your next scheduled recycle day.

### Day after Thanksgiving, Friday, November 29:

Normal collection of trash and recycling will be provided. City offices will be closed.

### Additional Christmas Holiday, Tuesday, December 24:

Normal collection of trash and recycling will be provided. City offices will be closed.

### Christmas Day, Wednesday, December 25:

No curbside collection. Recycling regularly scheduled for this day will be picked up on Tuesday (December 24).

### New Year's Day, Wednesday, January 1, 2014:

No curbside collection. Recycling regularly scheduled for this day will be picked up on Tuesday (December 31).



## Lifeguard Certification Courses

Are you 15 or older and looking for a great summer job, an after-school activity or



a challenging career in aquatics? Lifeguarding is an exciting option, giving you the chance to work as part of a team to help people safely enjoy the water. Lifeguarding also helps you develop skills and experiences that will be valued by colleges and future employers. All participants must pass a prerequisite skills swimming test prior to taking the lifeguard certification class; the test is administered the first day.

Classes will be held on Saturday and Sunday, March 9 – 17, and again on April 13 – 21, 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM. The price is \$275 for residents and \$295 for non-residents. For more information about this class, call the Recreation Center at (713) 662-7420 or visit [www.westutx.gov/reg](http://www.westutx.gov/reg).

[www.westutx.gov](http://www.westutx.gov)



# Parks & Recreation

## Friends of West U Parks

**Thank you for your investment in West U's Parks!**



**Direct Energy.**

**2012 -2013 Corporate Sponsor  
Friends of West University Place Parks**

## Park Lovers' Ball February 2, 2013

CONWAYMACKENZIE

Park Lovers' Ball Blue Moon Underwriter

The 22nd annual Park Lovers' Ball is just around the corner. Hilton Americas-Houston is the romantic setting for this fundraising gala. Event Chairs Kristine and Joaquin Martinez, along with Honorary Chairs Janine and Michael Schueppert, invite you to be part of this energy-charged party. Seats are still available, with table purchases starting at \$2,500 for a table for 10; individual seats are \$250. In a new twist to the ball, a special VIP Preview Party for underwriters at the \$3,500 level and above will begin one hour before the ball. The ball will also feature a \$50,000 check presentation to Friends by Direct Energy, the 2013 Corporate Sponsor.

The ball always has a few surprises in store for guests. We've had everything from living statues to mimes. What will it be this year? Well, you need to join us and see for yourself! In addition, there will be dinner and dancing to the lively tunes of The Grooves, silent and live auctions, and a big board.

Auction highlights include four days of world-class guided fishing in stunning Lake City, Colorado.

Call this beautiful spot home while you fill

your days with fly-fishing, four-wheeling and enjoying the breathtaking views that surround you. Whether you catch your meals or not, your personal gourmet chef will take care of all your meals! This trip includes airfare for four, guided fishing, gourmet chef, food and lodging.

Also up for auction is "Wine Country, Here We Come, VIP style!" This amazing trip includes a private lunch for eight at the home of Charles Creek Winery owners Bill and Gerry Briton. The Britons' home offers some of the most beautiful and exceptional views of the Sonoma Valley. After savoring the magnificent wine, delicious food and interesting conversation, how about a game or two of bocce? Leave this wonderful, memorable afternoon with two magnums of their award-winning wine. Up for another day of VIP treatment? Experience a day of touring with Napa Valley Chauffeurs (NVC). Plan your day or allow the amazing George Stone of NVC to plan the day for you. Private tours, gourmet lunch, incredible wines! There is more to this Napa trip, but we will save some of the amazing details.



Wine Country

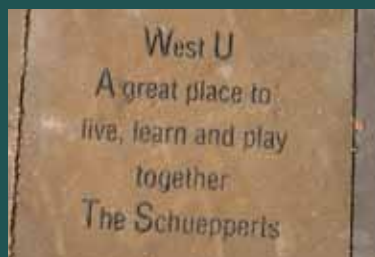


Weekend Getaway for Four  
at Lake City, Colorado

There will be something for everyone in the auction, from trips and sporting outings, to jewelry for that special someone, and everything in between. Invitations to the ball are arriving in West U households in early January. If you have not already made your reservations to attend, be sure to mail in the RSVP card; or contact Friends Executive Director Donna LaMond at (713) 662-7430 or by email at [DLaMond@WestUTX.gov](mailto:DLaMond@WestUTX.gov); or visit [www.westuparks.org](http://www.westuparks.org). This is an evening you will definitely want to experience. Do your part for West U Parks – Gather friends and neighbors, and put together a table at Park Lovers' Ball.



Park Lovers' Ball 2013 Honorary Chairs Janine and Michael Schueppert with daughters, Amelia, Chloe, and Lily, and Event Chairs Kristine and Joaquin Martinez with their daughter, Bella.



## Friends Park Pavers

Give a gift that keeps on giving year after year....buy a Friends park paver today for someone special in your life. Pavers are great for memorials, honoring someone, or just to show your pride in West U's parks. For more information and to order your paver, please call (713) 662-7430.

# Parks & Recreation

## Recreation Center & Colonial Park 2013 Fee Schedule

The 2013 fee schedule for the Recreation Center and Colonial Park Pool has been approved by City Council and will be effective starting January 1, 2013. New fees for memberships, walk-ins, rentals and classes are listed on the City's website at [www.westutx.gov](http://www.westutx.gov), or you can call the Customer Relations Desk at the Recreation Center, (713) 662-7420, for more information. Below is the new Recreation Center Fee Schedule. Guests must be accompanied by a West U resident.

### Walk-in Fees

Daily Walk-in Resident \$4, NR\* Guest \$10  
 Youth Public Swim Resident \$3, NR\* Guest \$6  
 Weekly Resident House Guest Pass \$15\*\*  
 Monthly Resident House Guest Pass \$50\*\*

\*NR – Non-Resident, \*\*individual option only



### Resident Memberships

Individual Annual \$180  
 Monthly EFT\* \$18  
 Individual Monthly (pay as you go) \$25  
 Couple Annual \$240  
 Monthly EFT\* \$23  
 Couple Monthly (pay as you go) \$30  
 Family Annual \$300  
 Family EFT\* \$28  
 Family Monthly (pay as you go) \$35

\*EFT – Electronic Funds Transfer

### Resident Member Racquetball Reservation Privileges | "Add on" to memberships

\$120 annually, \$10 monthly

### Resident Member Tennis Reservation Privileges | "Add on" to memberships

\$120 annually, \$10 monthly

### Resident Non-Member

#### Tennis Reservation Privileges

Separate from memberships \$200

Walk-in tennis reservations (1½ hour) \$4

## Summer Camp Registration: Mark Your Calendars!

Summer will be here before you know it, and West University Place's Parks & Recreation Department has the perfect camp for every interest! Choose from Building Brains LEGO Camp, Dance Camp, iKids Camp, Tennis Camp, Kidventure, Millionaire Workshop, Hogwarts Express, Sweets and Treats, Fashion Design Institute and more! Spaces are limited, so refer to the registration information below to reserve your spot!

### Camp Registration Information:

- Priority Registration for 2012 campers: Tuesday, January 29, through Monday, February 4.
- Resident Summer Camp Registration: begins Tuesday, February 5
- Non-resident Summer Camp Registration: begins Thursday, February 7
- Kidventure Camp Registration: begins Tuesday, February 5 (please visit [www.kidventure.com](http://www.kidventure.com))

Visit [www.westutx.gov/camps](http://www.westutx.gov/camps) for a complete listing of camp descriptions, dates and times, or call (713) 662-7420 for more information.



## SENIOR SERVICES

Thursday evening programs, for working Baby Boomers will begin on Thursday, January 3. Programs include:

- Tai Chi, an excellent form of exercise, will be held in 6 week increments beginning at 5 PM. This course is designed for all levels and the fee is \$23 per a 6-week session.
- Beginner Line Dance is a great way for couples to spend time together and get exercise! Or you could make a girls night out of it getting some exercise and ending with dinner and drinks! Class begins at 6 PM and is \$24 per 6-week session.
- New this season a Beginner Spanish Class for adults will be offered. Call (713) 662-5896 for more information regarding this course.

Looking for a new hobby or skill? Why not try a water color class or Mah Jongg lessons! Both could aide in utilizing the other half of your brain, and you could meet some new friends! Water color begins Thursday, January 10th, beginning at noon. \$31 for a six week session. Mah Jongg lessons are held on Fridays, from 9 AM – 1 PM and is \$35 for four lessons!!



Advanced registration required and can be done at the Community Building. For other fun and exciting active adult programs visit [www.westutx.gov/SeniorServices](http://www.westutx.gov/SeniorServices) or stop by the Community Building for a Hi Neighbor Newsletter. Have a skill or suggestion? Please call Senior Services to offer your talent or ideas and we will try to make it happen!

# Public Safety

10  
Tips

## Get Ahead of the Winter Freeze

It's not too early to begin preparing for the heating season. Check these 10 tips off your list and get ahead of the winter freeze.

- 1

**The furnace has been inspected and serviced** by a qualified professional during the last 12 months. (A furnace should be serviced at least once a year.)
- Chimneys and vents have been cleaned and inspected** by a qualified professional, including a check for creosote buildup. (Not cleaning your chimney is the leading cause of chimney fires from built-up creosote. This service needs to be done at least once a year.)
- 2

Fuel for the fireplace or wood stove is **dry and seasoned wood**.
- 3

**The fireplace screen is metal or heat-tempered glass**, in good condition and secure in its position in front of the fireplace.
- 4

**A covered metal container** is ready to use to dispose of cooled ashes. (The ash container should be kept at least 10 feet from the home and any nearby buildings.)
- Children know to stay at least **three feet away** from the fireplace, wood/pellet stove, oil stove or other space heaters.
- 5

All portable space heaters have an **automatic shutoff**.
- 6

Portable space heaters in use are **plugged directly into an outlet** (not an extension cord) and placed at least three feet from anything that can burn, like bedding, paper, walls and even people. (Place notes throughout your home to remind you to turn off portable heaters when you leave a room or go to bed.)
- 7

**Smoke alarms have been tested** to make sure they are working. (You need a smoke alarm on every level of the home, inside each bedroom and outside each sleeping area. For the best protection, the smoke alarms should be interconnected so when one sounds, they all sound.)
- 8

**Carbon monoxide alarms have been tested** to make sure they are working. (Carbon monoxide alarms should be located outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home.)
- 9
- 10

Adapted from an article by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)

## Crime Prevention

We cannot be reminded enough of the basics of crime prevention and strategies for safeguarding personal property. Many residents have learned that leaving property unsecured makes thefts easy. The Police Department has frequently investigated cases where property was left in plain sight in a vehicle, where vehicles were left unlocked and where garage doors were left open. No real effort was required by the thief!

**Here are some basic precautions to take:**

### House

- When you leave, close and lock your doors and windows—all of them, including the garage door. Even if you are home, make sure your home is secure. If you are in the backyard, make sure the front of the house is secure.
- Make sure your windows and doors are equipped with the proper locks. Make sure sliding glass doors are secured.
- Set your burglar alarm when you leave. Also set it when you go to bed.
- Close your blinds. If you don't have blinds or curtains, put some thought into getting some—burglars really do windowshop.
- Install security lighting.
- Keep shrubbery well trimmed around the house, especially near doors and windows.

### Vehicle

- When you leave your vehicle, lock it up—no matter where you leave it or for how long. You can lose your purse or even your car while unloading groceries.
- Set the car alarm when you leave it.
- Never leave the vehicle running or your keys in the ignition.
- Remove any valuables from plain view. If you cannot remove them from the vehicle, at least put them in the trunk.
- Park in driveways and garages rather than on the street.

As our final tip, we strongly request that should you observe anything suspicious, call the Police Department *immediately*. Don't wait to call. If you do, the opportunity to apprehend the thieves or recover any property will be gone. Day or night, call us, please. We would rather get called about suspicious behavior that turns out to be absolutely nothing than to have to take a report and begin an investigation of a theft that occurred while someone watched and did not call. Our investigations have uncovered more than one case where neighbors either heard or witnessed a burglary or theft and did not call it in at the time it was happening.

Report any suspicious activity to (713) 668-0330, or dial 911 in case of an emergency. We also encourage citizens to report any potential crime information or tips to [crime@westutx.gov](mailto:crime@westutx.gov). For additional information, contact Officer Katie Wilson at (713) 668-0330, ext. 5866, or [kwilson@westutx.gov](mailto:kwilson@westutx.gov).



# Public Works

## LET'S GET THE CASH OUT OF THE TRASH!

The Recycling and Solid Waste Reduction Board has initiated two programs recently in an effort to raise the recycling rates in West U. The first, "West U Recycles Day," held at Colonial Park on November 3, was intended to raise public awareness about recycling and to offer residents the opportunity to actually do so. People were encouraged to bring their charitable donations of household items, clothing, electronics, books, used sports equipment, eyeglasses, corks, pet supplies and unneeded medical supplies, and to "Take the Pledge" to do more recycling at home. They also could learn more about eco-friendly businesses and how to better care for the environment. Charities that benefited from the event included the Bellaire Lion's Club, Salvation Army, Medical Bridges, Better World Books, the International and Weekley YMCAs, and the Houston SPCA. Businesses that either participated or donated included Calloway's & Cornelius Nursery, Champion Energy Services, eVgo Network, HEB, High Fashion Home, Houston Arboretum, NaturaLawn, Natural Care Cleaning, Skeeters, Waste Management and Whole Earth Provision Company.

One of the main features of West U Recycles Day was a recycled art contest with entries from local students. West U Mayor Bob Fry and City Council members Susan Sample, Dick Yehle, Ed Heathcott and Joan Johnson served as judges, and the winners were Kevin Koy, Daniel Saco, Kimoni Hogen, Taysa DeMesa, Margaret Murray, Avery Bennett, Evan Muckridge, Morgan Fisher and Lisa Tate.

A second initiative to increase the City's recycling rate is the "New Neighbor Blue Bin" program. Any newcomer who has moved into West U since last summer has been contacted, welcomed and offered a new blue recycling bin, as well as information on best practices for recycling in West U. It is estimated that as many as 10% of our neighbors are new each year and so are unfamiliar with this curbside service.

The response to the New Neighbor program has been overwhelmingly positive, and we are hopeful that this will translate into an increase in our recycling rate. But West U's recycling rate at 27% is still below the national average of 35% (currently 80% of household "trash" is actually recyclable or compostable). It costs \$30/ton to dispose of solid waste versus earning \$500-800/ton in recycling income. This means the difference between a negative cash flow and a positive one for West U!

**So, let's get the CASH out of our TRASH!!**

## Household Hazardous Waste Voucher Program

Disposing of household hazardous waste (HHW) just got easier. The City of West University Place has negotiated with the City of Houston to allow West U residents to dispose of their items at Houston's facilities starting in December 2012. The program is offered to all West U residents. In order to participate, residents will need to request a voucher from the West U Public Works Department by calling (713) 662-5839 or emailing a request to [hhw@westutx.gov](mailto:hhw@westutx.gov). The voucher covers the \$75 fee otherwise charged by the City of Houston, so be sure to take as much as possible on your visit. Voucher quantities will be limited and dispensed on a "first come, first served" basis.

West U residents can now use one of two facilities to dispose of HHW:

### Environmental Service Center (ESC) - South

11500 South Post Oak Rd.  
Houston, TX 77035

**Phone:** (713) 551-7355

**Open:** Every Tuesday and Wednesday  
Hours: 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM  
Second Saturday of Each Month  
Hours: 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

**Website:** <http://www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste/esc-south.html>

### Environmental Service Center (ESC) - North

5614 Neches, Bldg C  
Houston, TX 77026

**Open:** Second Thursday of Each Month  
Hours: 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

**Website:** <http://www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste/esc-north.html>

For a complete list of what is accepted at these centers, please check the indicated websites.

## 2012 Hurricane Season Spared Texas Gulf Coast

Hurricane season ended on November 30, and the Texas Gulf Coast region remained unaffected throughout 2012. However, the year overall was very active with 19 named storms, ten hurricanes and one major hurricane (Category 3 or higher). The average Atlantic hurricane season has about 15 named storms, eight hurricanes and four major hurricanes.

The 2012 Atlantic hurricane season got an early start with the formation of two tropical storms well in advance of June 1st, the official start of the season. Tropical Storm Alberto formed on May 19th off the coast of South Carolina, and Tropical Storm Beryl – the strongest off-season storm to make U.S. landfall – developed on May 26th.

Although hurricane season has officially ended, residents should practice disaster preparedness year round.

"It is important to maintain a disaster plan for yourself, your family, your animals and your business," said Harris County Judge Ed Emmett. "Hurricanes are only one of the many threats we face in our region, and you never know when disaster will strike."

Make sure you're getting the latest emergency information. Sign up for alerts from:

- West University Place: [www.westutx.gov/enotify](http://www.westutx.gov/enotify)
- Harris County: [www.readyharris.org](http://www.readyharris.org)

Adapted from a November 29, 2012 news release from Harris County.

## Pollution Prevention

Everywhere we go and everything we do has the potential to affect water quality, whether directly or indirectly. Outdoor areas, from open-air malls, to tropical forests, beaches and the majestic mountain ranges, are affected by people and what they leave behind. With every activity we participate in, we leave behind something: litter, a lost shoe, the suntan lotion, an oil drip from the car motor, products for fertilizing the yard or killing the ant bed. Everything contributes to pollution, and here on the Texas Gulf Coast, rainstorms soon wash that pollution into the waterways and then to the Gulf of Mexico through our many bayous and bays. And, yes, we are talking about the things left behind by everyday people.

West University Place is covered by a Texas Discharge Pollutant Elimination System (TPDES) permit for storm water discharge as required by the Federal Clean Water Act Reauthorization of 1992 and the Texas Water Code. This permit requires that the City have a Storm Water Management Plan. This plan does not address flooding. Instead, it specifically addresses reducing the pollution of storm water runoff to the maximum extent possible.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) is in the process of issuing a renewal of the TPDES permit for small municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s). The new permit requires that West U update its Storm Water Management Plan to meet new permit requirements and to enhance the City's ability to reduce pollution entering U.S. and Texas waterways. Staff is working to finalize the plan, which was placed on the City's website in December and is anticipated to go to City Council for approval in January 2013.

# City CURRENTS

A Newsletter for  
the citizens of  
West University Place  
Winter 2013

## CITY OF WEST U OFFICIALS

**CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS** Mayor Bob Fry  
Mayor Pro-Tem Susan Sample  
Ed Heathcott  
Joan Johnson  
Dick Yehle

**CITY MANAGER** Michael Ross (713) 662-5810  
or [mross@westutx.gov](mailto:mross@westutx.gov)

**GENERAL INFORMATION** (713) 668-4441

**CITY WEBSITE** [www.westutx.gov](http://www.westutx.gov)

City Currents is a quarterly publication  
and is printed on recycled paper.

**City of West University Place**  
3800 University Boulevard  
West University Place, Texas 77005

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8 City Currents Winter 2013

## New Citizen Access Component for Utility Customers

Citizen Access, the newest component of the City's utility finance software, makes its debut as we enter the new year. Previously, a third party provided residents with the ability to view their bills on-line and to make onetime and recurring payments using credit cards, charging them a 2.75% fee.

New in 2013, residents can view past utility statements by logging onto the Citizen Access system. Residents will set up an account, selecting a user name and password. Afterwards, residents can easily manage their own accounts, including changing passwords or email addresses and retrieving lost passwords.

Citizen Access will offer new options in the future as we transition from the third-party processor. The ability to pay using a credit card will be available to users during 2013 after City Council determines whether to charge a fee for such payments. Until that time, customers can continue to use credit cards to pay their bills through the third-party processor.

"Many of our customers have told us they liked the graph that was on the bills created with our old financial software," said Finance

Director Rhonda Daugherty. "Others told us they found it confusing, since our monthly billing is calculated a month in arrears. With the new Citizen Access system, interested users will be able to monitor their actual consumption figures, which will assist them in determining the 'whys' of increased or decreased usage in their statements. We will continue to assist those that would prefer to talk directly to a staff member or need additional assistance regarding their utility bill." Citizen Access is available at [www.westutx.gov/citizenaccess](http://www.westutx.gov/citizenaccess).

### Late Fees

West U utility bills are all mailed on the same day, and they are all due on the same day: 20 days after the statement is mailed. It is important to know that the statement becomes delinquent, by ordinance, on the 21st day (or the day after the due date). The ordinance does not allow a grace period. That means the financial software automatically sets the late fee on the account on the 21st day. You have until 7:30 AM that day, before business hours begin on the 21st day, to have your payment in the Finance Department to avoid the 10% penalty. If payment is in the

drop box BEFORE 7:30 AM, it will be considered on time. Anytime after that, the account is delinquent. Postal issues do not waive the fee; the payment is posted when it arrives, not when the check is dated or when the postmark is dated. Make sure you allow at least three days on local mailings and seven days on your bank bill pay to ensure a timely delivery.

Regarding delinquent payment, the city's code of ordinances states:

### Sec. 86-34. – Billing, payment, nonpayment.

(a) *Frequency; when delinquent.* All users of utilities, solid waste collection, street lighting and other services furnished by the city will be billed monthly for services rendered. All bills will be due and payable on presentation and will become delinquent on the 21st day following the date mailed.

(b) *Late charge.* If a bill becomes delinquent, there is a onetime additional charge of 10% of the lesser of the amount due or the amount last billed.